

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

1. SIGHTING OF DHOLE OR INDIAN WILD DOG *CUON ALPINUS*
AT FAKIM, KIPHIRE DISTRICT, NAGALAND, INDIAHARKIRAT SINGH SANGHA¹, MANOJ SHARMA² AND ATUL JAIN³¹B-27, Gautam Marg, Hanuman Nagar, Jaipur 302 021, Rajasthan, India. Email: harkirat.sangha@gmail.com²Village Shankarpur, Ramnagar, District Nainital 244 715, Uttarakhand, India. Email: treeswift@gmail.com³D-127, Sarita Vihar, New Delhi 110 076, India. Email: atuljain1258@yahoo.in

While driving from Fakim village (25° 48' N; 94° 56' E) to Pungro (25° 51' N; 94° 54' E) Kiphire district, Nagaland, on May 02, 2011, we saw a pack of six dholes *Cuon alpinus* crossing the track around 15:45 hrs. Their progress was disturbed / intervened by the appearance of a local villager at the other end of the road. Cornered between our slow moving vehicle and the man on foot, who was pelting stones at them, they reacted immediately. The two adults and two pups, which were in front, bolted and managed to cross the road to vanish into the dense undergrowth, while two pups hesitated, and instead of following their parents, retreated downhill. They were thus separated from the main pack and were attacked by the villager. Fortunately, the pups were not hit by the stones thrown by the villager and they managed to escape.

In India, dhole is still found throughout much of its landmass south of River Ganges, especially in the Central Indian Highlands and the Western and Eastern Ghats of the southern states. They are also found through the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya and West Bengal. In the Himalayas and north-west India, their status is more precarious with a more fragmented distribution. They reportedly still exist in Ladakh. In Bhutan, there have been recent press reports that dholes have recovered from a government-initiated mass poisoning campaign in the 1970s. Two independent eyewitness reports identify dholes in six protected areas of Bhutan.

Dhole is listed as Endangered in the IUCN Red List (2011). The latest estimates are that of fewer than 2,500 mature individuals in the wild. Our knowledge of dhole population is limited to the estimates of their numbers within a few protected areas in southern and central India. Abundance is relatively lower in West Bengal, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. In the rest of north-eastern India, dholes are completely extinct or close to extinction (Durbin *et al.* 2004). No remotely comparable information on their population density is available for any part of South-east Asia, and there is no empirical data available for this region (Sillero-Zubiri 2009).

The status of dholes in the wetter forests of north-east India and Bangladesh is unknown though the species is thought to be rare or extinct in most of the north-east Indian states (except for Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh) and the Chittagong hill tracts of Bangladesh (Venkataraman and Johnsingh 2004). Thus, their status remains uncertain for north-east India. We are not aware of any recent sightings of dhole from Nagaland, except sightings by Angulie Meyase who has frequently travelled in different parts of Nagaland with foreign tourists. He sighted dholes twice in the forest near Khonoma. Four dholes were seen by him in around 2009 and one in 2010 (Angulie Meyase pers. comm.).

Our observations merit comment as the status of the mammal remains very vague within north-east India.

According to Venkataraman and Johnsingh (2004), viable populations may exist in northern Myanmar, where despite sufficient vegetation cover prey densities tend to be low. Recently in Myanmar, dholes were recorded by camera traps at 11 of the 15 survey areas scattered across the country (Durbin *et al.* 2004). *C. a. adustus*, a subspecies found in Myanmar, may range into adjacent parts of north-eastern India (Venkataraman and Johnsingh 2004). It is possible that the pack we sighted belongs to the Myanmar race although the HANDBOOK OF THE MAMMALS OF THE WORLD recognizes only three races, *C. a. alpinus* (Pallas, 1811) which occurs in central Russia and western China south through India to Bhutan and Bangladesh, *C. a. hesperius* (Afanas'ev and Zolotarev, 1935) which occurs in eastern Russia, China and South-East Asia, and *C. a. sumatrensis* (Hardwicke, 1821) which occurs in Sumatra and Java (Sillero-Zubiri 2009). Prater (1971) recognized only three races within the Indian limits – a trans-Himalayan, a Himalayan and peninsular form.

It is possible that free ranging packs from neighbouring Myanmar cross into India. However, keeping in mind the age (c. five months) of the pups it is likely that the pack we observed belonged to the Fakim area itself. The pup were old enough to be mobile as they accompanied the adults on the move. Dholes reach adult size by about 15 months

(Venkataraman 1998) although by about three months the pups accompany the adults during hunts (Johnsingh 1982). However, the pack may not be completely mobile until about eight months (Venkataraman 1998).

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2. NORTHERN TREESHREW *TUPAIA BELANGERI* IN SOUTHERN MIZORAM, INDIA

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North-east India comprising of the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Tripura forms a part of a rich biogeographic unit and is among the biodiversity 'Hotspots' of the world (Choudhury 1999; Myers *et al.* 2000; Ved and Lalramnuna 2008). Formerly referred to as Lushai Hills of southern Assam (Choudhury 2008), Mizoram is situated between 21.58°-24.35° N and 91.15°-93.29° E covering an area of 21,081 sq. km (Anon. 2006). In broad terms, the forests of Mizoram are classified as 'Cachar Tropical Evergreen (IB/C3)' and 'Cachar Semi Evergreen (2B/C2)' (Champion and Seth 1964). Saiha in extreme south Mizoram shares a boundary with Lawngtlai to its north. Some of the best rainforests of north-east India are found in southern Mizoram, covering parts of the districts of Lawngtlai and Saiha (Choudhury 2006).

Treeshrews are entirely confined to South and South-east Asia, and the latter region has the largest number of species. Of the three species found in South Asia, two are confined to the mainland, namely the Madras Treeshrew *Ananthana ellioti* Waterhouse 1849 in peninsular India and the Northern Treeshrew *Tupaia belangeri* Wagner 1841 in north-east India (Oommen and Shanker 2008). I here report two recent records of the Northern Treeshrew from southern Mizoram.

I saw a Northern Treeshrew at Tuipang (22° 18' 55.728" N; 93° 1' 35.112" E), the headquarters of Tuipang block in Saiha district, on June 17, 2008. The shrew had been caught

in a trap set in *jhum* (shifting cultivation) fields; was dead when I saw it. These non-baited traps, known as *mangkhawng*, are made using small logs and placed at the edge of crop fields (Ved and Lalramnuna 2008). This particular trap was c. 2.0-2.5 km from the town in a mosaic of old, new, and current shifting cultivation plots, with some village supply and safety reserves.



Fig. 1: Northern Treeshrew *Tupaia belangeri* at Saiha